Common Industry Format for Usability Test Reports

Jean Scholtz[1]

National Institute of Standards and Technology
100 Bureau Drive
Gaithersburg, MD 20899 USA
+1 301 975 3265
jean.scholtz@nist.gov

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INTRODUCTION
In October of 1997, the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) initiated an effort to increase the visibility of software usability. Participants from major software suppliers and customer organizations attended the first three workshops of the Industry USability Reporting (IUSR) project. They set the goals of the initiative:

- Encourage software supplier and customer organizations to communicate more effectively about user needs and tasks,
- Develop a common reporting format for sharing usability data with customer organizations, and
- Conduct a Pilot Study to determine how well the usability reporting format works and to determine the value of using this format in software procurement.

These consensus-building meetings identified the requirements for the common format and resulted in the Common Industry Format (CIF) for Usability Test Reports. The CIF is intended to promote incorporation of usability as part of the procurement decision-making process for interactive products.

Usability professionals within supplier organizations can use the CIF to generate reports, and customer organizations can use the reports as a basis for corporate decision-making. The report itself is intended for two types of readers: (1) human factors or other usability professionals in customer organizations who are evaluating both the technical merit of usability tests and the usability of products, and (2) other technical professionals and managers who are using the test results to make business decisions. The first draft of the CIF, developed through this consensus of the IUSR industry

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participants, is now ready. Trial use of the CIF report format is being encouraged via the IUSR Pilot Study. The CIF, as well as details of the IUSR project and the Pilot Study, can be found at http://www.nist.gov/iusr

WHO SHOULD ATTEND
We invite all interested conference participants to attend this SIG, including anyone who would like to learn more about the CIF and its use, as well as usability professionals:

- who are considering using the CIF to report on their usability testing,
- who want to understand the potential impact of the CIF in their vendor or customer company,
- who would like to participate in the Pilot Study, or
- who would like to help start up additional IUSR work groups in new areas.

FORMAT
The first part of this SIG will consist of a quick introduction to the CIF and its key elements followed by a discussion of how the CIF is used by various IUSR participants. Next, a sample of Pilot Study plans now underway, which range from supplier/customer industry pairings to stand-alone evaluations, will be presented. At this point, we will form breakout groups consisting of those interested in participating in the ongoing Pilot Study, those who want to understand more about the CIF and how to use it, and those interested in extending the CIF. These new extensions could include reporting for accessibility, for testing hardware, or for using the CIF as a requirements document, depending on the interests of the audience.

GOALS
At the conclusion of this SIG, we hope to have answered everyone's questions about the purpose of the CIF, provided some insight into the future of CIF usage, encouraged more participation in the Pilot Study, and begun planning for extensions to the CIF. In addition, we plan to submit a summary of the SIG's activities to the SIGCHI Bulletin after the conference.

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[1] Currently on detail to DARPA-ITO, 3701 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203 USA